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Character:	Fareeha "Pharah" Amari , Angela "Mercy" Ziegler , Lena "Tracer" Oxtan
Additional Tags:	ok so , fareeha is deaf , fareeha and angela are both art gays , Modern AU , Fluff , Angst , and i mean Angst , capitalised , but in later chapters , fareeha is WHIPPED , they are basically soulmates , there will be a pun or two , angela is a nerd , Implied Widowtracer , PTSD , Panic Attacks , Consent is very important , Asexual Character , spoiler: it's fareeha
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the art of love

by [illouminate](#)

Summary

Fareeha is deaf. She also likes art.

She meets Angela, who works at her local art gallery, and the attraction is instant.

the art of wonder

Fareeha gazes at the canvas before her, an odd feeling of serenity consuming her body and mind. Her arms are idly folded, and her muscles begin to relax.

Four water coloured pastels: red, blue, mint, and yellow, stare at her in the face in pleasantly geometric diagonals, surrounded by empty, white spaces. They sprout from grey triangles, the focal points, tripling in size but decreasing in gradient while doing so. The colours grow stronger when ascending, symbolising hope, strength, brazenness.

Fareeha understands the piece, and senses a feeling of belonging dragging her towards it, emotionally. It is a rainbow blossoming out of a storm. A beacon of light and hope ascending out of darkness. A silence in the chaos.

It is one of her favourite pieces, in all honesty. The simplicity and the meaning captivate her towards it. She thinks she can revel in it. She can revel in art itself. But what else does art do, besides engross the mind and please the aesthetic senses?

Fareeha is about to explore the remainder of the art gallery when she feels a soft tap on her left shoulder. Her body tenses up as she swiftly turns to her side, slightly irritated somebody had distracted her.

A young woman, around her age, watches Fareeha with furrowed brows. Fareeha notices that she has bright, eccentric blonde hair, pulled up into a ponytail with loose strands, like curtains, covering her face, and a jawline that can sharpen knives. Her deep, blue eyes would be hard to miss, even when standing in a dark room. She also notices slight worry edged onto her face, and, Fareeha must admit, she looks like art itself.

“Are you alright, miss?” the woman says, but Fareeha can’t hear her. She makes up her words though, as odd as it is staring at a stranger’s lips.

Fareeha points with one finger at her ear and shakes her head. She mouths, “Sorry, can’t hear you,” at the stranger and secretly wishes she could leave before-

There it is. Pity. The woman, Angela, as told by her nametag, tilts her head in confusion. Upon realisation, her brows slowly unfurrow and instead, pity edges its way onto her face and masks her features. Unsure of what to do, Fareeha makes out an “I’m so sorry” coming from the worker, before she glances back up at the artwork, not wanting to make any more conversation.

The truth is, Fareeha isn't even sorry. She had learnt to get over it all those years ago, on the battlefield in Egypt, when a fellow soldier had set off a massive mine bomb right beside her. The soldier had died right on impact, and fortunately, she had survived. "You're very lucky," the doctors told her. She had only broken an arm and drastically acquired noise-induced hearing loss, until the damage had expanded and resulted in permanent hearing loss and damaged vocal cords a week after. *Honour*, she thought optimistically. *You broke your body for the honour and duty for your country.*

Fareeha all but shrugs, and hopes the worker gets the hint and leaves her to be. After a few moments, when the woman still hasn't left, Fareeha glares at her with one brow lifted. She sees the woman admiring the artwork, following Fareeha's steps, and a slight smile is etched onto her face. Angela notices Fareeha staring at her, and says clearly so Fareeha can read her words, still appreciating the artwork, "can you read my lips?" She turns to look at Fareeha.

Fareeha nods once, and stares intently at the woman's mouth, misleading its purpose. She isn't a master at reading people's lips, but she gradually learnt how to overtime. She waits with patience for the woman to speak, silently praising her beauty.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she inquires, talking to herself rather than to Fareeha. She beams at the painting in front of her. "It is very simple, but also... beautifully brittle." She looks at Fareeha this time, and gestures at her to follow her. Fareeha silently obliges and follows Angela to an unfamiliar section near the end of the gallery.

She sees a group of people laughing around her. A tiny, almost atomic part of Fareeha wants to hear the sound of joy again, a sound she hasn't heard in so, so long, but her ego covers it up. If it's one thing she cannot be, it's weak. She vaguely remembers her mother telling her something when she was younger, right before she passed away, along the lines of "Don't let your weakness shape who you are. If you want to live in agony because of what you've got, then live in agony. Be a part of the herd of sheep who don't appreciate. But, *habibti*, you need to learn to be your own self, to be happy with what you are granted with. Don't let weakness and jealousy define you."

She has stuck to those words ever since.

Angela leads them to a piece at the far end of a gallery, and reveals a canvas to Fareeha. It is a painting of a landscape, probably of the opening of a forest. Blue, green, orange and yellow colours contrast and mix greatly with each other around the painting of dark, grainy trees. Fareeha furrows her brows in confusion, unsure why the woman led her to the mediocre painting.

Sensing Fareeha's misunderstanding, the woman starts explaining. "This piece is by..." Angela

says a name, but Fareeha can't quite comprehend it. "He wasn't just a poet, you know. I like this piece because it represents love. It was made out of pure love." She stares at the painting longingly with light eyes before continuing, "he rose up early before sunrise to admire the vibrant colours of the morning twilight, and he projected his views onto a canvas. It provokes, to me, a sense of secrecy, silence, and love all in one."

Angela pauses for a minute, and Fareeha looks at the painting in a new light. She crosses her arms, something she tends to do while focusing, and admires the small details and scabs on the painting. She feels the woman's eyes bore into the side of her head as she mentally notes the strange beauty of the piece. She wonders if there is a reason the woman likes the piece a lot more than usual. She wonders if there is background behind the love, and memories to unfold with it.

Fareeha turns back to the woman, who is now smiling a wide, nervous smile. The worker mouths with a hopeful gleam in her eyes, "what do you think?"

Fareeha swipes her right hand fingers over her left hand's palm, and mouths, "Nice." She wants to say more, but she can't really communicate other than with sign language, since good lip reading is a skill taught and practiced, so she leaves it at that.

Angela opens her mouth as if to say more, but a customer approaches her in need of service. She hastily shoots Fareeha an apologetic glance and a small wave before walking off. Fareeha watches her go, a small part of her missing the company. Nonetheless, she turns her attention back to the columns of art plastered onto the white walls.

She stays at the gallery for a little longer, and leaves ten minutes before closing. As she walks to the door, she hopes to see Angela again, but no traces of her are found. She steps out into the crack of sunset, the autumn Canadian sun shining brightly into her eyes, and heads home.

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Fareeha visits the gallery again after eleven days.

When the clear, automatic door opens before her, she spots familiar blonde hair talking to the receptionist to Fareeha's right. The woman's back turns before she can register anything as she locks eyes with Fareeha, eyes widening with recognition and a shy grin on her face. She approaches Fareeha with caution, staring at her own hands before signing an unsure "hello, how are you?"

Fareeha stares at her in surprise, an obvious smile making its way onto her face. She signs back with practiced ease, "I'm great. You?"

Angela follows suit, and signs, "I'm great," while nodding.

Fareeha stares at the woman in front of her, dressed in a neat, white sweater and black jeans, much cleaner and more formal in comparison to her own casual outfit. Her hair remains in a ponytail, similar to the first time Fareeha met her, while Fareeha's hair has been let down.

Fareeha stares at Angela in wonder and question, mouthing a small "so.." while she waits for Angela to start speaking.

"Oh! Yes, right. So, about a week ago, I was thinking about you, and how I know three different languages, but none of those help amount to speaking with a person who cannot communicate by tongue at all. I figured; why not learn sign language? It's simple, it's useful, and it helps bring those together who cannot speak or hear at all." Angela speaks fast and ends with a heavy exhale before smiling, and Fareeha is surprised she even caught the general message the woman was trying to pass.

She feels her heart drop a fraction, and grins at the enthusiastic woman in front of her, feeling special that she is the reason for someone learning sign language. She feels a seed of hope slowly flourish and sprout inside of her, and is filled with a sudden rush of courage and boldness.

Angela awaits Fareeha's response, slightly nervous at her reaction. To her surprise, Fareeha signs, "your number?" and now, she is the one expressing nervousness.

Angela catches on a minute later, blushing, and slips a piece of paper and pen from her pocket. She writes down her digits, using her palm as leverage, and hands it to Fareeha with a smile, who keeps the treasured item in her front pocket for safe-keeping.

"See you, Angela," Fareeha signs when she's unsure of what to do, and Angela follows the movements with a wink before turning away. Now it's Fareeha's turn to flush as she bites down a grin and tries to ignore the small ache in her stomach.

She doesn't see Angela again after that. She leaves the gallery after some time and walks home, eager to talk to the worker.

She sits on her king-sized bed in her small bedroom in her apartment. The room is dark, nothing but the light from her phone illuminating the area. Doubt floods through her and nervousness clouds her mind. *What if she doesn't want to talk to me?* Fareeha thinks, *what if she doesn't like me?*

She gives herself a mental pep talk, giving herself the strength to muster up a 'hello'. *Stop. This is weakness. Do not let it describe you. Aim for what you want, and shoot hard.* She thinks back to her mother's frequent advice she gave to Fareeha before joining the military, and acts upon it.

She types in Angela's number and saves her as a contact.

12:47 AM – Fareeha: Hello.

She lies down in her bed, not expecting Angela to respond in such early hours of the morning. But, when her phone vibrates and the screen lights up a minute later, she almost instantly gets up.

12:48 AM – Angela: Hi there! Who's this?

12:48 AM – Fareeha: Fareeha.

12:49 AM – Fareeha: From the gallery.

Angela takes longer to reply, and Fareeha wonders if she should have done this at all. The reply scraps her thoughts, though.

12:53 AM – Angela: Right! Sorry, I forgot.

12:53 AM – Angela: That's a beautiful name. What does it mean?

12:54 AM – Fareeha: Happiness.

12:54 AM – Angela: Of course it does. :)

12:55 AM – Fareeha: So... would you like to get coffee sometime?

12:56 AM – Angela: Yes, I'd like that. Is Tuesday alright with you?

12:56 AM – Fareeha: It's snowing on Tuesday.

12:57 AM – Angela: Okay then, how about Thursday?

12:58 AM – Fareeha: It's storming on Thursday.

12:58 AM – Angela: Haha, you should be a weatherwoman. :P

12:59 AM – Fareeha: I would, but it'd be boring.

12:59 AM – Fareeha: Or should I say...

1:00 AM – Fareeha: Pouring.

1:00 AM – Fareeha: :D.

Fareeha smiles to herself and laughs through her nose. The joke wasn't even that funny, in all honesty. Perhaps everything is funnier at night.

1:07 AM – Angela: mein gott.

1:07 AM – Angela: Oh my god. Please don't.

1:08 AM – Angela: date cancelled.

1:09 AM – Fareeha: That's awfully forward of you, Angela. I didn't know this was a date. We only just met. :).

1:09 AM – Angela:

1:10 AM – Fareeha: Is Friday okay?

the art of coffee

Chapter Notes

wow! thank you all so much for the kudos and comments! i didn't expect to see how many people actually like this poor excuse of a fic. anyways, i hope this chapter doesn't disappoint :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Friday night rolls around faster than Fareeha can register.

Fareeha and Angela talk during the week; about their families, their lives, art, and how Fareeha lost her hearing in the military. Thankfully, this time, Angela didn't give her any pity for her suffering. They talk about how, when Angela was younger, her parents both died. They wanted her to be a doctor and help others the same way they did, but halfway through med school, she dropped out and discovered her passion for art instead. She is now 37, working at an art gallery, and having the time of her life.

Fareeha, on the other hand, lost both her parents, too. She didn't know her dad and her mother left her before passing away precisely a year later. She didn't get an education after high school. Instead, she joined the military to help honour her country, but resigned after her injuries. She is now 32, alone, and waiting for her time to pass by enjoying the simple things in life; such as, art. And coffee.

She gets out of bed and notices that she has a mere half hour to get ready, still half asleep from her nap. She hastily showers, brushes her teeth, gets dressed into an informal coat and jeans, and is out of her apartment by six.

The café is a short distance from her apartment block, so she makes it there in five minutes. It's a nice day, with just a hint of cold breezes despite the sun shining. She places her hands in her coat pockets as she sees birds singing on rooftops, a sound she had forgotten over the years. She has forgotten the sounds of almost everything, like the sounds of traffic, the beach, and music. The only sound she hasn't forgotten, as cliché as it sounds, is the sound of her mother's laughter, a sound she had acquired the privilege to listen to so rarely, and a sound she had gotten so accustomed and fond to in her younger years. She misses Ana so, so much.

Her head pounds. She reaches out to her forehead in an attempt to soothe the ache.

Upon arrival, she recognises Angela sitting impatiently on a table outside, bobbing a leg up and down. She lifts herself up as soon as Fareeha approaches her, and sends a small smile her way. Then, Angela is hugging her. She wraps her arms around Fareeha's neck for what feels like an eternity. Fareeha hugs her back, arms gently wrapped around her waist as she breathes in Angela's clean, flowery scent. Well, if she can't use all of her five senses, then she should put the rest to good use.

They pull away from each other and sit at a table outside, while Angela orders for the both of them. Angela looks determined to show Fareeha something, so when the waiter leaves, Angela immediately starts signing.

"Look, I'm getting better at this already!" she signs with great enthusiasm. A ray of sunshine paints her face and she looks almost majestic; mystic. Her eyes are a brighter shade of blue, and Fareeha can't help but to stare.

She quickly blinks and looks away before Angela realises her sudden inattentive state. "You are," she signs back with a beam, and turns to Angela once more. "All it takes is practice."

Angela sticks her tongue out as she tries to form a new sentence using her hands, the words coming off them at a walking pace. "I will get better. I am determined. I'll soon be fluent," she finishes with a persistent grin.

Fareeha nods and looks down, suddenly feeling awkward. She hasn't done this in a while. Ever since she moved to Canada for solitude, she had no one, since all her friends had been left behind in Egypt. To say the least, she isn't a people person. Fareeha feels a hand on her jaw, turning her to look at Angela. "What's wrong?" Angela mouths, her features engraved with slight concern. "You look unhappy."

Fareeha tells her the truth, already feeling like she can trust Angela. "I don't really have anybody here with me," she mouths and signs slowly to keep up with Angela's comprehension pace. The same waiter that served the couple comes back with their hot drinks, and mutters something Fareeha can't quite understand. Angela thanks the waiter before turning back to Fareeha, taking a sip of her drink. Fareeha continues, "I don't tend to hang around lots of people so I just... don't know what to do."

Angela gradually nods in understanding, taking in the signs. "That's okay," she eventually replies. "You have me now," she grins, and Fareeha's stomach does a little backflip. She is confused for a moment, unsure of why she felt that, before taking many sips of her coffee.

They finish their drinks after twenty minutes, both enjoying the other's company. Angela looks up

at the sky and Fareeha follows suit. She hadn't realised the sun descending so much, with the night just on the horizon. She looks back at Angela intently, who signs a sentence to her.

Fareeha widens her eyes and feels her cheeks flush, unaware of the confused expression on Angela's face. She bites back an amused grin and looks at the floor, switching her gaze to Angela a split second later.

Angela tilts her head. "What's so funny?"

"Did you mean 'we should go'?" she mouths clearly, so Angela can read her lips with no mistake.

"Yes. Why? Didn't I say that?" Angela asks with a hint of panic.

Fareeha shakes her head almost instantly. "No." Angela waits for her to continue, urging her on. "You said fuck."

Angela catches on quickly, her mouth turning into the shape of an 'O' at the speed of light. Now, she is flushing as she laughs incredulously. She covers up her tracks by stating, embarrassed, "well, that is not what I meant."

"Well, I guess that didn't go as you planned," Fareeha smiles.

Angela's humiliation is quickly replaced by a joking slap on her forehead. "I like your weather one better."

[]

Fareeha asks if Angela would like to watch a movie back at her place, with subtitles of course, and Angela laughs before agreeing and starting the short walk to Fareeha's apartment.

They make it to Fareeha's apartment when the skies turn dark. They open the door to the building and walk up the stairs to the second floor in sync. Fareeha withdraws her keys from her coat pocket when at her door and unlocks it. She enters it, unminding its familiar surroundings, while Angela follows close behind and looks around in astonishment.

They enter a brightly lit room. Beige paint coats the surrounding walls, with a large, open balcony opposite the entrance. A cream couch, patterned with dark circles, sits in the centre of the room, facing a decent flat-screen TV. An open kitchen connects with the living room to the right, and a small, narrow hallway is attached to their intersection, leading to Fareeha's bedroom and bathroom.

"So," Angela wonders out loud when Fareeha glances at her, "how do you know when people knock?"

Fareeha snorts. "I don't." She signs.

They watch a movie. Fareeha switches off the lights and is charged with making popcorn while Angela selects a movie of her choice. Fareeha lifts an eyebrow when she sees the title of the movie on her TV screen, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, but she doesn't complain. She sits on one end of the couch, besides Angela, and hands the worker her bowl of popcorn.

Sometime through the movie, Angela takes her place on the floor, outstretching her legs. Fareeha finds difficulty concentrating on the movie, though, since all she can seem to focus on is Angela.

A flood of longing washes over her. She has never been more thankful for the dark. Fareeha forces her eyes back onto the screen; she tries to remain civil and mature, but she fails every time. Her eyes keep glancing back to the woman seated on the floor as she tries, with great difficulty, to contain herself. The air is filled with Angela's emitted delight as she closes her eyes and tilts her head back in what seems like a joyous chuckle.

She watches Angela smile, she watches the way Angela's eyes crinkle in the dull lighting of the room when she laughs at a joke Fareeha is unaware of, she watches the way Angela practically glows in the room from the TV's radiated light, *a beacon of light in the darkness*, and all Fareeha can care to admit is, *God, I'm hooked*.

Chapter End Notes

or, as i like to say, "she thought the movie was pretty (interesting), but i thought she was prettier."

the art of travel

Chapter Notes

thank you all so much for the support! i hope yall like and enjoy this chapter! :)

Fareeha hires her old translator for her trip to Egypt.

She had decided a few days ago to finally visit her mother's grave after seven years of complete radio silence. Her mother, Ana, never learnt of her deafness. A sniper bullet took her life away on a battlefield before it happened, and Fareeha wanted revenge, only to result in her own injury. Tomorrow, she will tell her all about it.

Fareeha hasn't seen or spoken to Angela since their movie night five days ago. After the movie had ended, Fareeha had awkwardly suggested Angela staying over because of the "late hours of the night," but Angela politely turned her down, claiming she didn't want to bother Fareeha. Fareeha eyed Angela leave, and shot her a small smile when Angela turned to shut the door. A vague sense of lypophrenia filled her up afterwards, a feeling of sadness without a cause, but Fareeha shook it off.

Now, standing in the centre of the airport waiting for her translator to arrive, she contemplates texting Angela about her sudden journey. Figuring she has nothing to lose, she turns on her phone.

4:18 PM – Fareeha: Going to Egypt for a while. See you. X

When she looks up from her screen, she sees a certain young woman running towards her. She recognises the familiar face from so long ago, and waits for her to arrive.

"Hey! Sorry I'm late. Traffic was a killer," Lena, her translator, signs, clearly out of breath. Fareeha waves her off, glad to be in the presence of an old friend. They set out walking to the terminal, bypassing groups of people crying and hugging each other, sad to see a loved one go. The pair purchase their tickets, transfer their luggage, and go through security with ease.

"So, how are you?" Lena asks while taking her seat, waiting to board the plane. Fareeha takes in her dainty figure. Light bags take their place under her light eyes; her short, brown hair covering a fraction of her face. She has an almost peaceful vibe radiating off of her. She looks oddly tranquil,

Fareeha notices.

“Never better,” Fareeha signs back, taking a seat beside Lena. She frowns at her phone when she sees that Angela hasn’t replied.

“Met anyone?” Lena winks.

Fareeha shakes her head. “Not really. I can tell that you have, though,” she smirks.

Lena smiles a bright, tender smile. Her eyes fill with love as she signs to Fareeha, “good eye. I have, actually. Her name is Amélie. We met a year ago, and, honestly, I didn’t really like her much. But now, we’re stronger than ever. She’s wonderful. I’d love for you to meet her.”

Fareeha expresses quiet mirth. She uncharacteristically yearns for the kind of love Lena is currently revealing. She pushes the feeling back into a dark, closed part of her mind, and instead focuses on Lena. “I am happy for you. You deserve her,” she signs. Lena shines brighter.

□

The pair brace themselves for a lengthy ride before boarding the plane. They are seated on the side towards the rear end of the plane. Fareeha stubbornly fights for the window seat, and after a few minutes of quiet bickering and brutal hand gestures, Lena gives in with a heavy exhale.

“I’m getting the window seat on the ride back,” Lena narrows her eyes.

“No you’re not,” Fareeha teases. Lena rolls her eyes, accepting the fact that she can’t win.

Fareeha checks her phone one last time before the plane takes off. She simpers to herself when she finds a text from Angela.

5:06 PM – Angela: Safe travels! Don’t miss me too much. ;)

5:10 PM – Fareeha: Impossible. :).

She is left wondering if Angela was flirting or if the exchange was just friendly banter.

□

They arrive at Cairo in the mid-morning. Fareeha's body aches from the ten hour plane ride and she itches to move. Once the two of them exit the airport with Lena hailing a cab, Fareeha feels relieved. The vaguely familiar humidity of the air hits her face and she suddenly feels at home again.

She longs for sleep. They catch a cab and arrive at their hotel within minutes, the both of them thankful for the hotel being in such close proximity to the airport. The first thing Fareeha sets out to do when she enters her shared hotel room is immediately lie down on one of the two provided beds.

She pays no mind to what Lena is doing; sleep overtaking her body merely a minute later.

□

When Fareeha wakes at sunset, the first thing she notices is Lena knocked out on the bed beside her own. She yawns and runs a hand through her messy hair, rubbing her eyes before taking the light sheets off of her and taking in her surroundings.

The walls are tinted with a delicate tan colour. Two beige beds sit beside each other, facing a wooden dresser occupying a large TV. A bathroom rests in a short hallway near the front door, followed by a small kitchen opposite it. It isn't the best, but it's liveable for a week.

Fareeha feels her stomach rumble with hunger as she heads for the kitchen in search of something to eat. She mutely praises Lena when she fixes her gaze on room service food resting on a bench. She heats up and devours the meal, consisting of a simple beef burger and fries, before readying herself for her trip to her mother's resting place.

She takes a short shower and fixes herself up in the bathroom, brushing both her hair and teeth. When she leaves the bathroom, she is grateful to see Lena up, who gives her an obvious once over with an eyebrow raised and asks, "Why so dressed up for?"

Fareeha tosses Lena a jacket and replies, "we are going to the cemetery. Get dressed." Lena is

about to protest, eyeing the dark outside, but she remembers the purpose of the whole trip.

□

“You ready, love?” Lena signs to Fareeha, who takes in a deep breath and nods.

They sit in a rented car outside the main cemetery. The darkness of the night looks almost intimidating to Fareeha as she mentally prepares herself to visit a place that triggers tragic memories that had befallen on her.

“I will be quick,” she signs to a patient Lena when she has gotten out of the car.

Fareeha walks down an acquainted pathway to her mother’s grave, a site she had visited so often so long ago. Several lamp posts light her path as she almost automatically brings herself to the unwelcoming grave on top of a small hill. She looks around at the empty cemetery. All she can focus on is death, and how she thinks her time is coming far quicker than expected. Her head aches.

Weathered stone sits before her as she approaches the grave of *Ana Amari*. She kneels down on the grainy sand, moving away the remains of what looks like a purple orchid, her mother’s favourite.

She is at a loss of words for a moment, unsure of what to say. Then she opens up for the first time since Ana’s death. *Mother, she thinks, it’s me. I apologise I haven’t visited in so long. I just needed a break from everything.*

Fareeha knows her words are going to waste, but it is nice to let it all out. *I tried, mother.* She shudders as she recalls her experience on the battlefield. *I tried to avenge you, I tried to bring your killer to justice, but I failed. I know I was being weak, and I know that I shouldn’t have strayed from my path. I’m sorry.* She feels like crying, she wants to, and she feels like screaming, but nothing comes out. She rests emotionless.

I know, you told me that justice isn’t always the best option. But I built a wall instead of a bridge. I desperately wanted vengeance, and I dug myself into a ditch while doing so. I lost my hearing, my ability to talk, and I resigned from the military. All I’m doing with my life now is waiting for my time to pass. I’m trying to hold on and be strong.

But, the good news is, I think I might see you again soon. She looks up at the stars, and a sad smile covers her face. She wonders if her mother is staring down at her. *I have an appointment with the doctors in a month. They're giving me an MRI scan and... I am sure nothing good can come out of that. I have a feeling, mother, that I am going to be with you in the stars very soon. My time has almost passed.*

With that, Fareeha looks at the ground. She wonders how and when she got so vulnerable.

A memory pops up into her mind. It's of her at the art gallery, with Angela presenting a peculiar painting of a forest to her. Then she smiles. *There's this woman...* Fareeha pauses. She isn't sure why Angela is a sudden topic of interest for her to express, but she thinks about her to her mother anyway. *Her name is Angela. She's... fascinating, to say the least. She gives me hope, and makes me feel like a 'normal' person again. She's persistent and determined, and she fights for what she believes in. She reminds me of you, in a way. You would admire her.*

Fareeha has nothing more to say. She says her goodbyes and her hopes to visit soon. She gets up and leaves the cemetery behind in a foreign memory.

□

Lena and Fareeha grab a bite to eat and are back at the hotel by midnight.

"Are you gonna visit your extended family while you're here?" signs Lena when the pair are in their room.

Fareeha snorts. "No. All they are interested in is my relationship status. I might as well just send them a card with 'finally taken' in bold and 'an advil for the headache you all caused me' in italics."

Lena guffaws in a way that makes Fareeha beam with joy. When Lena settles, the pair discuss their plans for the remainder of the trip, and Fareeha is glad to have Lena with her on her journey.

□

The week passes by in a blur, and soon enough, Fareeha and Lena are back on the plane returning home to Toronto. Fareeha allows the younger woman to sit at the window seat, much to her

annoyance.

Angela had texted her before she left the hotel, wanting to know when Fareeha will arrive. Fareeha had told her, and hoped to see her at the airport awaiting her arrival, but she knew that Angela would be working.

She attempts to sleep in the plane, but the bumpy ride makes it almost impossible. She tries to stay awake for the ten hour trip instead, running on three cups of caffeine.

□

They safely make it back to Toronto by noon. The pair exit the plane and retrieve their luggage, a bag each for the short trip, and go through customs. Then they head to the arrival lounge.

When the automatic sliding doors open before Fareeha, and when Fareeha says she didn't expect any more company, she definitely didn't expect to see a certain blonde haired woman in her presence.

Fareeha and Angela lock eyes, and suddenly the world stops moving around them. Angela grins elatedly, revealing extremely white teeth. Fareeha mirrors her action and takes steps forward to embrace the slightly shorter woman. She drops her bags and takes Angela in her arms, wrapping them gently around her body. A small metal barrier stands in their way, and Fareeha wishes it disappears. Instead, she focuses on Angela, and how she acquires the same, flowery scent as last time, and how her warmth is radiating off her body onto Fareeha's cold one.

Angela pulls away after a moment and fixes her gaze on something behind Fareeha. Fareeha turns, and there Lena is, an expression of surprise and slyness on her face.

"You never told me you had a girlfriend!" she signs, and Fareeha knows that if she spoke that out loud, her voice would be shrill.

Fareeha flushes crimson, her lips thinning in embarrassment. "She understands sign language, you know." She thinks she feels Angela laughing behind her. "And she is not my girlfriend. We are just friends."

Lena all but winks in response. She extends a hand out to Angela, who shakes it confidently. The two introduce while Fareeha picks up her bags and waits patiently for the pair to finish

conversing.

“How are you getting home, love?” Lena signs when she reverts her attention back to Fareeha.

“By cab.”

“Alright. I’ll talk to your cabbie then bounce. Amélie’s picking me up.” Lena replies and nudges Fareeha in the ribs with a ‘you know what’s happening tonight’ smirk.

Angela, still standing behind the barrier, lightly taps Fareeha on the shoulder to gain her attention. “Nonsense! I will drop you off,” she demandingly signs.

Fareeha softens her posture. “I do not wish to trouble you.”

“Never.” Angela reassures with a head shake.

The trio head outside the airport, with the sky overcast and on the brim of raining. Lena says her goodbyes to Angela, and when she is sure Angela isn’t looking in her direction, she signs to Fareeha.

“You two aren’t ‘just friends’. I saw that look you made when you laid eyes on her. You had a lightness in your face, and... It wasn’t platonic. I’ve only seen that look once in my life, on Amélie, when I told her I love her.” She pauses and looks pleased at herself when she notices Fareeha’s confused expression. “But! Whatever you say. See you, love!”

Lena leaves Fareeha staring dumbly at the ground as it begins to drizzle.

the art of support

Chapter Notes

tw // panic attacks

Fareeha falls asleep in the passenger seat of Angela's car. She is so overcome by exhaustion that when she is woken up by a comforting shake of the shoulder by Angela at their destination, she can barely keep her eyes open.

"Your stop," Angela signs eventually when Fareeha glances in her direction. Not in a demeaning way. Angela just wanted to be in the presence of Fareeha for a little longer.

Fareeha lets out a heavy breath before rubbing at her eyes. She looks out the window at the pouring rain, and then back at Angela. "Come up with me," she signs back, hope pooling in her eyes.

"You need to rest."

"I can compose myself," Fareeha reassures, stifling an obvious yawn.

A hint of a smile tugs at Angela's lips, but it is quickly replaced by earnestness. "You look like you haven't had a decent sleep in years. Go home and rest. I'll visit later," Angela signs, and Fareeha notices that she has gotten a lot better at it. Her stomach flips.

"Alright," Fareeha gives in. "I cannot believe you are out to get me for resisting a rest." Her eyes blossom into a sleepy smile. Not awaiting Angela's response, which she is sure would be irritation, she exits the car, gets her luggage and heads for her apartment.

[]

Angela stays true to her words and visits Fareeha post-sunset.

Fareeha opens her door after a quick text from Angela, and allows the woman entry.

□

Fareeha teaches Angela ASL. She teaches her the difference between ‘fuck’ and ‘go’, in which Angela furiously blushes at, and Fareeha wonders how on earth anyone can mix the two up. She wonders if Angela’s tutor had anything to do with it.

Fareeha feels light when she spots Angela trying to contain herself by putting on a straight face when Fareeha cracks a joke after some time.

“The gallery is getting a new piece tomorrow,” Angela changes the subject, trying not to smile. “I would like to show it to you. It really is a sophisticated sight.”

“I will be there first thing in the morning.” Fareeha promises with a grin. She is glad to share her passion for art with Angela.

Angela’s features transform into something of nervousness, a sight rare for both her and Fareeha. She signs slowly, “well, I was hoping if- maybe- I can stay over for the night. I mean- if you would allow me to. But, it’s up to you.” Angela averts her gaze from Fareeha’s amused eyes.

Fareeha chuckles at Angela’s tenseness and rests a hand on her shoulder blade. She meets anticipative eyes. “Yes, I’d like that very much. My house is yours, always.”

Angela lets out a steady breath and smiles. It is almost midnight; the pair had been conversing on the couch for hours, and Fareeha had felt not one moment of apathy.

When she’s with Angela, she feels... buoyant. Optimistic. Hopeful.

Fareeha steadies her gaze on Angela, a thankful inquiry dwelling in her eyes. She hadn’t noticed before, but Angela’s eye colour is her favourite shade of blue. It’s like an ocean, vast, soothing. And beautiful. Angela holds her gaze, and Fareeha shifts under the intensity of her stare. There is something cornering her eyes that Fareeha can’t quite pinpoint. It’s foreign, the look.

Fareeha accidentally makes the mistake of dragging her eyes down to Angela's lips, but she quickly averts her gaze a second later and lets out a puff of air. She stands up and stretches, well aware that Angela's gaze still lurks on her from behind.

"I feel rather tired now," Fareeha sighs when she turns back to Angela. "I think we should call this a day."

"I think so, yes," Angela agrees. She pulls herself up from the couch and looks around awkwardly. "I... don't have anything with me."

"Oh! Right, I'll grab something for you," Fareeha replies with composure, and heads to her room. She grabs her smallest sweater and sweatpants that she is sure would fit the smaller woman, and strides back to her. Angela is waiting where had Fareeha left her; staring out the window to the balcony, and only when Fareeha extends her hands to gift Angela with her belongings does Angela realise her presence.

Angela stares down the clothes and silently thanks Fareeha before proceeding to take off her top. She is halfway through when Fareeha notices her actions and turns her back to Angela out of modesty, her face tinted with crimson.

Several thoughts run through Fareeha's mind, an odd one being to turn around and face her unknown feelings towards Angela, but she chooses the better option and excuses her presence by going to the bathroom. She hastily brushes her teeth and readies herself for the night.

When she opens the door to the hallway, Angela is awaiting her. "No need to be embarrassed," Angela innocently smiles, regarding the earlier situation.

Fareeha raises a brow in question and gives Angela an obvious once over. Fareeha's grey sweats fit perfectly on Angela's legs, with her sweater slightly oversized. She looks ravishing in such simple attire, and Fareeha wonders how she does it; Angela's messy blonde hair adding to the beauty. She suddenly notices their close proximity and spontaneously takes a step back.

"You can take my bed," Fareeha sighs, straightening her back. "There's an extra toothbrush in the second draw."

"And where will you sleep?"

“On the couch.” Fareeha recognises the mischievous look in Angela’s eyes. She almost feels herself smile before the words are even said.

Angela smirks and runs a tired hand through her tangled hair. “Come to bed with me. I’m not going to let you sleep on the couch.”

Fareeha sucks in a deep breath, almost tempted to take up the offer. “I can’t,” she decides. “I am... not a particularly good person to sleep next to, to say the least. Besides, I do better on the couch. Goodnight.” Fareeha dismisses the conversation.

“Fareeha,” Angela tugs at her arm, and Fareeha replies with a tired and mulish smile. Angela doesn’t question her after that, and so Fareeha leaves, feeling Angela’s eyes bore into her back.

□

Fareeha’s dreams that night are filled with a certain blonde. Both good and bad dreams occupy her mind.

□

Fareeha wakes to the smell of breakfast and bright sunlight blinding her eyes. She tiredly removes her blanket and sits up straight, her back aching from the couch’s lack of comfort and hard surface.

She is confused for a moment as to why she isn’t in her bed, but when she pulls herself and sees a blonde in her kitchen, the previous night comes pouring back into her mind. She smiles sluggishly at the memories.

She rubs at her eyes and stumbles over to Angela, stopping behind the counter and taking a seat on one of the chairs. “What are you doing?” Fareeha asks when Angela turns to her a while later.

“Well, good morning to you too,” Angela mouths, completely turning her body towards Fareeha as she leans against the benchtop. “I’m making pancakes. I hope you don’t mind.” Fareeha shakes her head in return. Angela glances at a clock on the wall and informs, “We have to leave soon.”

“Right.”

The couple eat and finish their meals in complete silence. Despite Fareeha’s efforts to try and convince Angela to wear an outfit of hers for the day since she doesn’t have any new ones, Angela politely declines. She returns her borrowed clothes with a respectful ‘thank you’ and proceeds to wear her previous day’s outfit. Fareeha wears an outfit corresponding to the warm weather outside, and together, the pair leave and decide to walk to the gallery.

□

They cut through an empty park to arrive at the gallery. The sweet fragrance of the earth fills up Fareeha’s nose as she heads down the familiar pathway with Angela by her side.

She looks out at her surroundings. Vividly coloured grass spreads far and wide; well-shaped bushes coating areas of it. Trees align her path and she once again realises the relish the place brings her. It is extremely full of life, parallel to all the places she had been in her lifetime which have caused nothing but death and anger. This park, complete with Angela, grants her sincere harmony.

She lightly tugs at the shorter woman’s arm. She opens her mouth and ascends her hands to start speaking, but once she does that, the ground beneath her starts faintly vibrating. An earthquake.

She looks at Angela’s face, and then at her surroundings, before she is harshly reminded of her jarring past. She alarmingly remembers, in precise details, her time on the battlefield. Tanks pass her by, guns go off at distressing rates, and shouts are heard from every direction. She suddenly can’t breathe.

Her heart pounds as she desperately looks around, searching for some type of clarity. She’s in danger. From what, she has no idea. She thinks she’s dying. She’s drowning in an ocean and she can’t reach the top. Her breath gets caught in her throat.

She thinks she feels a hand on her arm, but she’s not sure. Her vision is blurred and her shaking body masks her surroundings. She might pass out, the world is crippling around her. Everything is caving in on her. *It’s all in your head, Fareeha. Fight it.* She tries to calm down, but she can’t. She has completely lost control of herself.

She thinks she collapses. *This is the end.*

Fareeha abruptly feels soft hands cupping her cheeks. Her head is harshly pushed forward as lips meet her own. She doesn't understand what's going on, but her senses slowly return to normal. Her eyes squeeze shut and open and she tries to make sense of the situation. She finds Angela kissing her. Fareeha stays still, unmoving. Her eyes are wide when Angela pulls away as Fareeha tries to level out her breathing.

Angela slowly pulls back, eyes gradually opening as her gaze lurks on Fareeha's parted lips. Her eyes then meet Fareeha's, who stare at her in confusion.

"I- I'm sorry," Angela starts. They are both seated on the base of a tree trunk, Fareeha's back leaning against it. She realises that when she felt as though she collapsed, Angela had pulled her down. Angela continues, "I didn't know what to do when you were panicking. Then I remembered that slowing down your breathing helps end panic attacks, and... I'm sorry. It was an impulse reaction. I had to keep you safe."

Fareeha's features grow softer as she tries to control her heavy breathing. She still feels the ghost of Angela's lips lingering on her own. "Don't apologise," Fareeha signs when her breathing has levelled out. "Thank you. It usually takes me more than two minutes to calm myself down. Your support is greatly appreciated."

"Usually?" Angela's brows furrow until she is reminded that PTSD is a very common mental disorder to acquire on a battlefield. "Oh, right."

For the second time in less than twelve hours, Fareeha notices her closeness to Angela. She gently pulls herself up and Angela follows suit, expressing worry to Fareeha. "Fareeha," she latches on to her elbow. "Do you want to go back home and rest? I won't force you to come along." She looks up at the taller woman with wide eyes.

Fareeha shrugs. "No. I want to be here for you. Besides, this isn't the first panic attack I've had." Angela shows her gentle eyes and they continue their walk, Angela's arm latched through Fareeha's.

[]

"This is what you wanted to show me?" Fareeha asks, crossing her arms. Fareeha had waited outside the building whilst Angela and a few of her co-workers had set up the painting for display, and when Angela had come outside to inform Fareeha of its completion, Fareeha was excited to see it regarding Angela's cheery attitude towards it.

“Yes,” Angela replies, smiling from ear to ear. “Your thoughts?”

Fareeha studies the blackness. At first, all she sees is darkness. Then the blackness transforms into a dark red, and another look at another corner presents dark green. Somewhere between the two colours she sees a deep violet. She notices that different dark colours, almost indistinguishable from each other since they are all closely related to black, are grouped together in squares splattered around the canvas. She thinks she sees the true black square in the centre, but a brown masks it after a blink. “I honestly... don’t know what I am looking at.”

Angela grins wider. “You see; that’s the point. It’s all about perception. You think you see the black square, but after a few seconds, it’s not so black anymore. You usually cannot tell where the black is since most squares have an almost exact resemblance to it. I don’t even think there is a *truly* black square. They are all so similar. Wow, this gets me frustrated,” she chuckles.

Fareeha chuckles too, because seeing Angela’s great passion and enthusiasm for such a simple yet complex piece has a great effect on her. She beams with pleasurable anticipation.

She recognises the meaning of the piece: that perception can be masked by deeper factors, and somehow, in a faint part of her mind, she is reminded of their earlier kiss.

the art of festivities

Chapter Notes

aaaand here it is! a month later! im so sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

7:36 PM – Angela: Festival this weekend! Up for a day out?

7:50 PM – Fareeha: Definitely.

□

The midday sky in late October was more than inviting, welcoming the ongoing festival below. Clouds come and go, presenting a blazing sun beneath the pale sheets of white. It's remarkable, really, how the vast blueness of the sky that stretches for infinity can hold a number of different secrets.

Find comfort in the skies, her mother had told her, *for it is our resting place*.

Fareeha sits on the pavement, awaiting Angela. The clouds shift and move above her, forming irregular shapes that can only have meaning simply by using the creative mind. She wonders what it would be like to visit beyond the limitless realms of the sky. To transpire its secrets. To finally taste the flavour of freedom. She muses: is anyone really free in this world? Even birds are chained to the sky.

Yes, Fareeha spends an unusual amount of time pondering over pointless things. But who can blame her? Her only method of communication *is* through her hands. Although, it does come in handy at most times.

She smiles timidly to herself and shakes her head.

The sun above her is suddenly covered by a dark silhouette. She glances upwards, and upon recognition, her smile grows wider. "What's so funny?" Angela asks with a slight smirk. She lends a hand to Fareeha who takes it gratefully and uses it to hoist herself up.

“Nothing you would find amusing,” Fareeha vaguely replies. She takes notice in Angela’s outfit; she is dressed in a plain black t-shirt and copper-coloured shorts, topped off with a cream cardigan. It is inconsistent with her own jeans and multi-coloured bomber jacket.

Angela shrugs. “I thought so. Well, should we be off then?” She links her arm though Fareeha’s.

Her heart may or may not have instantly sped up. “It would be my pleasure to.” She signs back with difficulty.

□

So begins the line ride. The pair start off slow and safe and begin by riding on the Ferris wheel. The line is quick to move and soon enough, they are seated opposite each other in a tight metal cage, the doors closing and the sluggish cycle around the wheel beginning.

“I love rides like this,” Angela starts and focuses at Fareeha. “The view of the city is amazing. Although, it could do better with a glass of wine.”

“Wine!? It’s noon,” Fareeha disbelievingly chuckles at Angela.

She winks at Fareeha. “You can never go wrong with a Pinot Noir.” She proceeds to glance out the cage at the alluring horizon.

Again, the sight of Angela compels Fareeha greatly.

When outsiders look at Angela, they see a woman. A woman gifted with extensive beauty, maybe, but nothing more. When Fareeha looks at Angela, however, she sees warmth. A place of sanctuary. A vehement woman with great aspirations and love to those she cares about. She may be turbulent, sure, but overall she is delightful company. Maybe that’s why Fareeha is so fond of her.

Fareeha is immersed in her daydream but blinks just in time to make out a sentence from Angela. “What are you looking at?” She slyly signs. She must’ve caught Fareeha’s stare.

“An angel-a,” Fareeha shrewdly replies; her hands, like silk, smoothly producing the words.

Angela raises her eyebrows. “I’ve heard that one before.” She doesn’t miss a beat. She turns her face away from Fareeha, probably to mask her reddening face, but the action just fuels her.

The immense joy Fareeha feels when she watches Angela is enough for her to whip out her camera. Angela turns to her the second she snaps a photo and immediately covers her face. Fareeha pays no mind to it, though. She is captured by Angela’s colossal beauty marked on the photograph.

They finish the cycle without another word, and Fareeha feels blessed to have such a close friend whom she feels so strongly towards.

□

They board a roller coaster next. Sat beside each other in the second row, something about the ride’s thrillingness intrigued Fareeha.

Angela had objected the ride at first, claiming that she doesn’t “trust the 17-year-old boy operating it,” with her life which led Fareeha to believe that she somewhat might have a raging fear of them. She doesn’t know how, but she finally convinced Angela to ride one with her in the end.

Now, as the ride shudders and starts moving forward inch by inch, she might have regret taking the nervous Angela on it. Her legs slightly tremble as the ride gradually ascends, and Fareeha gives her a *‘trust me, nothing will happen’* look in an attempt to calm her. In response, Angela grabs Fareeha’s left hand.

The higher they go, the tighter Angela’s grip is on Fareeha. After what feels like an eternity, they reach the top with the free fall only seconds away. Fareeha glances at her partner who looks as if she would do anything to get out of the situation she is currently in.

She barely has time to process her thoughts when the ride jerks forward. Her eyesight wavers and her head spins as it sways from left to right and right to left. Colours bleed together as the ride shows no sign of slowing down, and Fareeha realises that she hasn’t been this excited in a while.

Soon enough, the ride comes to a halt. Fareeha huffs and glances around her; everyone still frozen in their place from the aftermath of the ride. Angela looks as green as grass and Fareeha silently

laughs at her reaction. They are still holding hands; the intensity of it making it look like their hands are moulded together.

Fareeha gently tugs her hand away and provokes Angela to stare up at her without a word. Then, she laughs. Her features blossom into that of extreme ecstasy, and Fareeha can't help but wonder: how does Angela sound? Is her voice sweet and fruity like the joy one gets from watching a loved one sleep? Or is it more masculine and flat like an impatient dog on a stormy day?

Fareeha forcefully pushes the questions back into her mind. She is, thankfully, happy with the way she is, and has no intention of wanting to change anything. Instead, she focuses on the bright day ahead of her and exits the cart alongside Angela.

□

The couple stroll to the food court. They buy fairy floss; because how else would you enjoy a festival without the sugar goodness?

Fareeha, waiting amidst the sea of people for Angela to order their snacks, observes a man walk up to Angela in line. She initiates a hug which the man gladly returns as he finishes with a small kiss on her cheek. Uneasiness rises in Fareeha like a tidal wave caused by faint betrayal.

Does Angela have a boyfriend? A boyfriend that dresses like a cowboy? Oh god, what if she's straight? The bubble of questions is popped when a smaller man, probably Japanese, appears next to the two and kisses the Cowboy on the mouth. They part ways with Angela after a quick wave and she returns with the food.

Fareeha mouths a small 'thank you' and sits on one end of a small wooden table. "Who are your friends?" she pries after a few minutes of silence, demolishing her snack completely whilst Angela is only halfway through.

"One is a co-worker. The other is... his boyfriend." Fareeha nods.

More silence follows, disregarding Fareeha's lack of ability to hear.

Angela finishes up and has an urge to make conversation with Fareeha. "So- I have never really asked, but I have always wondered; how is life like for you? How did you cope? Surely it must

not have been unchallenging.”

Fareeha heaves a weary sigh. “Well, life is no different to anyone else. I mean, besides the lack of hearing. Think of it like a TV with no sound but closed captions on. As for how I coped with it, after I resigned from the military, life was pretty devastating. I didn’t know *how* to cope; I relied on my hearing to a great extent that I lost it. I was pretty shaken that I distanced myself from everyone. And let me tell you; that might have been one of the messiest things I have done.

I wouldn’t talk to anybody, or at all, for that matter, even while I still had the chance. But after a month or two, I started gaining support. From friends, from old colleagues, from everyone I once knew who just wanted to see how I was. It was really endearing and made me realise that there *are* great faults in life. Then, I moved here and now- now I have you,” her eyes go light, “and for that I wish nothing more in this world. Thank you, Angela. Your support never goes unnoticed.”

Angela remains speechless. “Oh, Fareeha...” she shifts forward from her spot on the table so that she is mere centimetres away from the younger woman. She strokes a finger down her cheek, and Fareeha nervously swallows in attempt to hydrate her throat from the action. “It is for my pleasure. You can trust me on that.”

Fareeha is well aware of their closeness but makes no effort to distance herself. She shifts her gaze from one eye to another, noticing Angela’s blown pupils, and then to her lips. The shorter woman graciously mirrors Fareeha’s action which causes boldness and affection to reside within her.

A storm circles her mind. Her thoughts are vague and unclear. But in the hurricane in her head, she picks up on one thought and she decides, *I want to kiss Angela*. Slowly, the wind blows on Fareeha and slowly, she mouths, “can- can I kiss you?”

Angela wastes no time and takes Fareeha’s face in her hands. She pushes herself forward and in one, swift movement, Fareeha and Angela are kissing.

Fareeha has never felt more alive. The sound of her heart rapidly beating in her chest mixed with Angela’s clean scent surrounding the air around them leaves her in peace. She reaches out to Angela’s neck to pull them closer together and she is, in that very moment, truly tranquil.

Fareeha would have not guessed that she would be kissing Angela Ziegler on a table in public. Still, she takes it. She feels Angela’s lips on her own move in a rhythmic motion; almost like a lullaby. Fareeha wishes this moment could go on for centuries, and yet again, Fareeha decides that she likes kissing the older woman and would like to do it more frequently.

Fareeha whimpers when Angela pulls away. Her heart races and her head spins when Angela traces a thumb over her *Udjat* tattoo under her right eye. A split second later, she takes Fareeha in for a second kiss, and Fareeha thinks she has found true happiness.

□

She remembers asking: what does art bring to a person?

Well, it brings people closer together. It absorbs two minds and helps them identify one another in ways no one else can. It brings a person the power to change the world.

Sure, many can have different feelings towards it, but in the end, art carries love within itself.

□

□

Fareeha sucks in a cold breath and pulls out her phone, squinting at its blinding brightness in the dark. She looks at her wallpaper, the photo she took of Angela on a Ferris wheel all those weeks ago, and she thinks, *everything will be sound*. Nothing is a risk when she has Angela.

Composing herself for the unfamiliarity of what's about to come, she hazily enters the hospital.

Chapter End Notes

literally all i got out of this was fareeha in a bomber jacket. also, is that mccree and hanzo? or is that mccree and genji? i wouldnt know. i ship both.

the art of heartbreak

Chapter Notes

bring on the angst! haha. shit. i'm so sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Thump. Thump. Thump.

Fareeha's head feels heavy. The excruciating pain thumping in her skull alongside the ringing sensations in her ear bring her nothing less than anxiety.

She staggers in her walk almost drunkenly, the tight feeling in her head making it difficult to stand. She stumbles to the nearest bench and hastily slumps down, feeling nothing but the pulsating pain. She reaches into her back pocket and abstracts some opioids the doctors had ordered to her. She swallows down two pills; almost choking from the dryness of them both.

Thump.

A deep sigh escapes her lips as she reflects on the several events that occurred in the past thirteen hours. The faces of the well-skilled doctors and nurses as a translator had explained to Fareeha her condition all resembled pity. She despised it. She didn't like feeling inferior and being reduced to just the 'abnormal' negative aspects of her being.

For one, Fareeha is glad she is out of the hospital and on her own accord (well for now, at least). But on the other hand, Fareeha is terrified. She is frightened by her fate. She is fearful for her life, and she is fearful for Angela.

God, how will the news affect her? Fareeha unintentionally ponders as she buries her still aching head into her palms, an icy breeze brushing past her. She does not want to think of that reality.

Thump.

Huffing in frustration when her migraine shows no sign of dissipating, she stares up into the dawn-breaking sky, freezing winds making her shiver.

Fareeha first looks east. Bright yellow and orange colours sweep through the clouds at the pre-rising sun with the mountains in the far distance resembling mysterious shadows. Despite the sky's vibrancy, it seems oddly empty; no signs of life residing within it. Normally, Fareeha would marvel at the subject of the very moment. She knows something is terribly wrong when she hardly even bats an eyelid at it.

Fareeha then looks west. The dark blue of the long night still lingers on the clouds as it gradually evaporates, the moon the only source of light to illuminate its paths. Fareeha doesn't find comfort in its lifelessness, either. She is immune to all emotion, only focusing on her dulling pain and unknown fate.

In an attempt to feel whole again, she thinks of the two poles as life and death. The bright east being life, and the dull west being death, of course. But where does Fareeha stand? And where does she desire to go?

Does she *want* to fight for her destiny?

The many questions leave side-tracks in her mind and all she desires for while sitting on a bench outside the hospital is a long and peaceful sleep.

[]

'Cancer of the ear', her doctor had called it. Oh, how painfully she wanted to laugh bitterly at how original, yet devastating, the name was. Her translator had looked her dead in the eyes with a sorrowful query dwelling in them whilst delivering Fareeha's fate. She badly wished Lena was there to not make her feel dismay, although her reaction would've probably been worse and more dramatic than Fareeha's.

The disease is very rare, according to the Doctor. It was very alerting to them since causes of the cancer were unspecified and they have no clue what spurred it. The only solution for Fareeha to pull through is chemotherapy, which she would have to undergo every fortnight. The cancer is rapidly growing, much to Fareeha's distress, and she would have to start undertaking her treatment as early as tomorrow. Her doctors are unaware of her chances of survival, adding on to Fareeha's suffering.

Fareeha, upon receiving the news, felt no constant emotion. Her sorrow drifted to anger which drifted to surprise which drifted to apathy. Her body fell tense upon sincere realisation and her body shook with the fear of the unknown. She thinks she was going to have another panic attack

as she suffocated in the heat of the intensity of the moment.

All she wanted, dressed in white on the clean hospital bed, was comfort. Such a simple request yet the price was unpayable. It was too early in the morning to awaken either Angela or Lena, and the only other person she was truly close to was her mother. God, she longs for her mother at such great extents it sometimes keeps her up at night.

All she wanted, dressed in white on the clean hospital bed, was comfort. She wanted her mother's soft and soothing touches caressing her cheek while she inaudibly tells Fareeha to focus on the present and not so much on the future. Ana would've insisted for Fareeha to fight it, to keep going no matter how complicated it seemed. Ana would've expressed her motherly love to Fareeha which, in itself, would be a blessing.

All she wanted, dressed in white on the clean hospital bed, was comfort.

□

Fareeha asks, or rather begs, Angela to visit once the night sky has rolled over. Angela, having no clue as to what storm she has gotten herself into, happily obliges with a hint of confusion.

Fareeha dreads Angela's arrival, well aware of what she has to do. She shakes with nervousness when Angela walks through her wide-open door, inviting Angela's attention to drift to her distraught figure immediately. The older woman drops down her bag and runs to Fareeha with wide, concerning eyes. She squats down to Fareeha's position on the floor on the base of her cream couch, and slowly takes her face in her hands. "Fareeha, baby, what's wrong?" she mouths while examining Fareeha's reddening features. "What happened at the hospital?"

Fareeha swerves at the nickname, only to be pulled under by a wave of inevitability. She tenses up and gently removes Angela's dainty hands from her, putting on a brave face. "Nothing," she lies. "In fact, everything went grand." She forces herself to smile at the relieved face in front of her in the dim lighting.

"Oh! That's great to hear." Once again, Angela pulls Fareeha forwards and takes her in for a deep kiss.

Fareeha, of course, melts under her touch and responds to the kiss with great enthusiasm. She then remembers the purpose of Angela's visit and abruptly pulls away, to who Angela gives a slightly embarrassed expression. She raises her hands as if to ask a question but Fareeha beats her to it.

“Angela, we need to talk.”

Those five words were enough to make Angela’s blood run cold and her face to pale up like a ghost. She nods in return, unwillingly urging Fareeha to continue.

“I have been thinking lately- about us- and I think I need to make something known. A few days ago, I was thinking about how much you have changed and shaped my life. It is honestly one of the most flattering things that have happened to me,” Fareeha miserably blows air out of her nose.

“And I speak the truth when I say the same, Fareeha.”

Fareeha physically holds herself back from reaching out to Angela and caressing her pale cheeks in an attempt to comfort the now visibly fraught being. But she knows what she has to do. “I was starting to think- and I led myself to believe- that I... fell in love with you. But I was wrong.” She swallows hard to keep up her tough and brazen façade.

Fareeha studies Angela. She observes how her usually eccentric essence has a dim glow now, and she observes how Angela is kept frozen on her place on the floor, not daring to move an inch. She keeps silent to allow Fareeha to continue, her eyes glued to the Egyptian.

“I realised something. I realised that it wasn’t *you* I loved, but merely your *actions*. The fact that you tried so, so hard and made a grave effort to communicate with me. I realised that I love what you do to me, like making me feel sound and whole again. I love how you learnt sign language for the sole purpose of being in my presence for longer. I love *those*, Angela. Not you.”

Fareeha captures the exact moment Angela’s heart visibly breaks. She sees it in her, now glossy, eyes; when Fareeha had falsely stated that it was never Angela she loved. Fareeha had broke that moment, too. Her heart scorched and burned and she knows that she will never be able to repair herself from that moment.

How is it that life can hand you such beautiful treasures yet rip them away from you at a moment’s notice?

Fareeha silently shudders and hopes Angela doesn’t notice. Angela, meanwhile, is trying to compose of her own self. She feels lost and betrayal and hurt and anger all at once. Despair courses through her veins and her thoughts are in a violent whirlwind. She is shattered.

Angela responds some time later, Fareeha not really keeping track of the time following her own self-imposed heartbreak. Angela's eyes gloss and she looks truly demolished; but she signs with such a ferociousness in her words that Fareeha's heart is already full of regret. "You're not thinking, Fareeha. This is not you."

Fareeha wonders if her false confidence had dissipated along with her own self, because eyes are the windows to the soul after all. She wonders if Angela had shred through her charade and captured the true spirit of Fareeha. Fareeha almost wishes she did.

"I'm sorry," she manages to sign, her body as tense as a rock. Fareeha feels empty.

"Fareeha, please-" Angela signs, desperately reaching out to evoke some sort of emotion out of Fareeha. The look on Angela's face, a look of defeat and a look of extreme agony, is enough for the younger woman to look away.

"Please, Angela," she mirrors Angela's previous words. "Leave."

Fareeha closes her eyes, trying to keep herself under control, but when she opens an eye to find that the front door had been closed, she lets everything out.

Fareeha cries. Fareeha, who hasn't cried since she learnt of her mother's demise, cries. She cries for herself, she cries for Angela, and she cries for what their relationship is and what it could have been. She tries to stop the tears from flowing out but she truly is hysterical. Her hands tremble from sorrow.

Only at midnight does Fareeha find the courage to lift herself up from the floor and drag herself over to her bed.

Sleep doesn't come easily. She feels restless and tosses and turns in her sheets. Her sleep is sacred and dispersed and that night, when she finally does fall asleep, her dreams torture her with memories of Angela's broken face.

The following day, right before her chemotherapy, Fareeha has another panic attack.

She gets through it, but without Angela's support, she is in a deep torment.

□

Fareeha unconsciously notices one day that she had been heading west the entire time. The sudden realisation makes her truly, and finally, fall apart.

Chapter End Notes

i hope you all don't hate me too much for this. will fareeha survive? who knows? (i do)

the art of reminiscing

Chapter Notes

im sorry for the late update (again), and i hope that yall are as pumped as i am that we've almost reached the end of this fic!

anyways, this chapter starts off a bit slow, but it gets more interesting. maybe. depending on your judgement. enjoy :)

The headaches get worse. Day after day and night after night. The pain may subside, but no matter how many painkillers she swallows in a row, it never truly leaves. It's always there.

She had consulted her doctors once, when the pain was unbearable, but not much progress was achieved. All they had done was refill her medicine cabinet and advised to drink more fluids. There was not much they could do anyway, so she doesn't blame them.

She never did get used to it. One would think that having the same intrinsic pain thrown at her on a daily basis would be easy to grow accustomed to. But no, she never does, because it's different all the time. Sometimes it comes in slow avalanches, but at other times it would occur in fast tides.

She doesn't get used to it at all, and it slowly kills her.

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One day, when the cold morning breeze awakens Fareeha from her quiet slumber, she notices the gradually beginning loss of her hair. She sighs in alarm, the situation exacerbated by the sudden ringing in her eyes.

This is real, Fareeha hesitantly acknowledges. *I am dying*.

The sky is blanketed by clouds outside her window and the glum hues only worsen her mood. She brews herself a cup of coffee and spends no time letting it cool; downing it in minutes. Her current state reminds her of something-- of *someone*-- but she doesn't dare to dwell on it for too long. So she goes to the gym to let out her newfound feeling of despondency.

When Fareeha arrives at the gym dressed in her workout attire, she desires for one thing and one thing only: to fight. She hops over to an unoccupied punching bag and warms herself up by performing some simple exercises.

Then, she starts punching. Standing shoulder width apart, she unclenches and clenches her fists before pulling them towards her face, extending out her left fist to strike a punch. She starts off slow, concentrating on the rise and fall of her breathing before gradually picking up her pace.

Right hand then left hand then right hand then left. It became rhythmic. Her well-structured punches hit the bag with ferocity and she feels almost feral in the violent state she resides in. She focuses on the swing of her hips and the cool feeling of skin coming in contact with hard leather. Anything to keep her mind in control and not brooding about *her*.

Oh, God. *Her*. The woman who granted her direction and support when she needed it most. The woman who greeted her with gentle softness in such a way that made her feel a good kind of vulnerable. The woman who kept Fareeha's head above the water in an impeccably loving and solicitous manner that Fareeha adores.

She fights harder and faster. She cannot let her thoughts drift her away from the present. But somehow, everything comes back to her. Everything comes back to Angela, and Fareeha hates it. She hates how even after three weeks, her thoughts are still clouded by Angela. Every little thing she does reminds her of Angela. She longs to move on, but that achievement seems almost impossible at her stage.

Sweat beads start forming at the tip of her forehead. She strikes another punch, harder than she has before, and slices a knuckle. A sharp pain rises in her tensing arm yet she doesn't halt her actions. She stares down for a split second but disregards it; deciding that she has endured much, much worse injuries in her military experience that her slight fracture is basically harmless.

And so she continues fighting.

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Fareeha was, undoubtedly, at a pretty jovial stage in her life and has been for the past couple of weeks. Since she met Angela, she should specify. She had pondered over the thought as she eyed down her girlfriend emerging from her bathroom with a fond glint in her eyes.

“Good morning, shamsi,” Fareeha had signed from her position on the couch. Her fondness immediately turned to amusement when Angela had paused completely, furrowing her brows.

Angela’s cheeks turned the slightest bit crimson, her mind still hazy from sleep. “What?” She had confusedly questioned, rubbing at her eyes.

“My sun,” Fareeha replied, absent-mindedly patting her couch for Angela to lay down beside her.

“I thought I was your moon?” Angela had teased once sat cross-legged beside the younger woman laying down. She wore a small smirk and glanced at Fareeha, remembering the night before.

Fareeha shrugged before sluggishly answering, “Well, you’re everything to me.”

Whether Fareeha had said that with affectionate or comical intentions, Angela did not know. She shook her head and sighed, well aware of her reddening cheeks which she subtly tried to hide despite the sunshine pouring through the balcony window. “Really? Wow, I asked for that,” Angela suppressed a chuckle, choosing the latter option.

Fareeha had responded with a toothy grin, noting the stray strands of blonde hair partly obscuring the Swiss’ vision. She sat up, using one arm to hoist herself up, and reached out, tucking them aside. As she leaned back, she discerned a dark and foreign gleam blooming amidst Angela’s pupils.

Fareeha stared at her in question, unsure of what to do, until Angela answered her unasked inquiry. She unfurled her legs before pushing the Egyptian back down to her original position on her couch. Fareeha had gasped in surprise but looked on as Angela positioned herself above Fareeha. Their intimate proximity brought out a smirk in Fareeha as she waited for Angela to initiate their obvious kiss.

“Can I?” Angela mouthed after what seemed like a lifetime of awkward glances. Fareeha nodded, almost too desperately that Angela simpered. Her hands rested idly on the older woman’s waist which quickly moved to her face when Angela leaned down for a kiss.

Adrenaline captured her body as she inhaled Angela’s clean scent and tasted her love. Her mind was empty, focusing only on their rhythmic motions and the swell it gave her heart. A hand left Angela’s face to seek refuge in her ruffled morning hair, the intensity and endearment of the kiss

never lessening. Only when Fareeha had distractedly tugged on Angela's hair was when she realised she made a great mistake.

Angela had bitten her bottom lip, and before Fareeha had the chance to worry about which direction the kiss was taking them, she felt a naked knee grind on the crux of her legs.

Fareeha froze, tensing up with wide eyes, before ending the kiss and shuffling to move out of Angela's grasp. She stood up and exhaled, feeling flustered and embarrassed. Mustering herself up for the truth bomb about to explode, she turned towards Angela, who stared on with nothing but confusion in her confound gaze.

Angela spoke first, furrowing her brows and tilting her head. "Did I do something wrong?" Fareeha could see her heavy breathing and the blush making its way over her thin nose and hollowed cheeks.

She felt a tang of guilt when she held Angela's strong gaze. "No. No, actually it's my fault-"

"Oh, Fareeha, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have pushed myself on you like that. I was caught up in the heat of the moment that I forgot to ask for your consent. I had no intention of making you feel uncomfortable." Angela looked genuine, as if Fareeha would have left her if she didn't apologise truthfully, and she couldn't have had that happen.

Fareeha smiled gently at her. "Don't apologise. As I was saying earlier, it's my fault. I should have told you earlier instead of leading you on."

"Told me what?"

Fareeha breathed deeply, feeling a string of nerves. She sat back adjacent to Angela on the couch and revealed, "Well, I'm asexual. Although, I much like kissing you."

Angela blinked at her for a second; still confused, but realisation struck her like lightning. Fareeha was frightened by her reaction, but when Angela's features turned into somewhat relief, Fareeha loosened up. "Alright then, I support you, always. I still apologise about before, though." Before Fareeha had a chance to protest and demand Angela not to feel the least bit remorseful, she continued on, "Now, where are we going for breakfast?"

Fareeha grows tense, a feeling of nostalgia bubbling up within her. Although she allows herself to recognise her feelings (because what more of a healthy thing can she do after a break up?), she shouldn't be feeling this; she can't be feeling this. Her fate had been decided, and she has no willpower to change its course. She cannot drag Angela in only to make her suffer in experiencing her demise in what will probably be a few months' time.

She tries to strike a punch, but an unexpected sob catches her by surprise. She ignores it in hopes of its disappearance, but when she throws another punch, it's deflated by another sob. Her fights grow weaker and weaker with every passing second as she hesitantly gives up, figuring it can't mask her current sorrow.

Fareeha slides down a nearby wall in an attempt to soothe her down. She slides down to her knees and buries her head so far into them she wishes she could dissipate. She hugs them as if her life depended on it, and she weeps. She cries the sorrow of her soul and she cries for the unfairness of life.

Fragments of her sanity slip out with every breath. Her hands are shaking as she reaches out to her back pocket to acquire her phone, remembering the candid photo she took of her Swiss ex-lover. It feels as though that photograph is the last piece she *has* of Angela, although the statement is false. Sure, she has some clothes Angela had left behind and all their exchanges over text, but there's just something about the *joy* in the image that keeps the raging sea calm.

Fareeha admires the image with blurry, bloodshot eyes but if anything, it makes her feel terrified. Is she terrified of her future that she knows so little about, or is she terrified of leaving Angela behind? She already has, to an extent, but mentally and spiritually leaving her behind?

Or she probably fears the day someone would say her name for the last time. The lump in her throat bobs. A heavy weight resides on her shoulders and she feels like she'd shatter if she even takes another breath.

Fareeha doesn't move for a while; trying to clear her mind and exterminate her wretched thoughts. But with a sniff and shaky hands, she finally gains the strength to lift herself up and make her way out, looking down and avoiding any type of contact from the civilians around her. Her heart aches.

11:36 AM – Fareeha: Lena? Are you in town?

11:40 AM – Lena: yeah! whats up?

11:41 AM – Fareeha: I need your advice for something. Mind coming over?

11:43 AM – Lena: sure :) ill be there in a jiffy

□

When Lena arrives later that day, Fareeha feels grateful. She wears a real and sincere smile when the Brit enters through the threshold, a look almost foreign for her. The last time she felt real content was quite a while ago, and she expresses great appreciation towards Lena.

Fareeha welcomes her guest and offers her a drink, to which Lena politely declines. “So, what do you need my help for?” Lena asks when they take their seats opposite each other on the couch.

Fareeha swallows. “Actually, I have something to tell you.”

Lena raises an eyebrow, urging her on. “Shoot.”

“I...” Fareeha pauses, unsure how to continue. She realises that Lena is the only person that she has to open up to, and her nerves start building up. “To put it simply, I have cancer. It’s life-threatening and the doctors are worried of my passing very soon.”

Lena’s cheerful expression instantly burns out, and Fareeha feels uneasy. “Aw, Fareeha, I- I’m so sorry. I’m absolutely gutted for you! I don’t know what to say, honestly. Is there anything I could do to help ease your suffering? *Fuck*, Fareeha, I’m sorry,” Lena ends, the compassion clear in her eyes.

And Fareeha hates it. She decides not to interrogate the smaller woman about it, though, and gets on with her previous point. “Do you remember Angela? Blonde hair, short, Swiss?”

Wonder replaced Lena’s previously sympathetic expression as she signs, “Your girlfriend? I thought she was German?”

“Don’t tell her that,” Fareeha tenderly twinkles. “Also, she’s my ex. That’s actually why I asked you to visit.”

“Holy shit, Fareeha. So much has happened in the past few weeks. I’m sorry I wasn’t here for you during it all. It must suck! When did you break things off?” The compassion found its way back onto Lena, and yet again Fareeha ignores it.

“After I found out about my disease, but I didn’t tell her about it. I didn’t want her to worry and become too attached only to find out about my passing merely a few months later.” A lump forms at the back of the older woman’s throat and Fareeha is surprised she has been as calm as she is despite her gym session prior.

“You have to tell her, love. I’d be pissed if Amélie kept such a thing from me, even if we broke up.”

“But that’s the thing. She hasn’t made any effort to try and come into contact with me, despite leaving her on a rather... vague note,” Fareeha looks away. Her emotions are building up inside of her once again and she cannot let them resurface. She notices the drizzle outside of her window and shudders. “I don’t think she wants anything to do with me anymore.”

“No, Fareeha, don’t say that! That’s the pessimism talking. If I could see how affectionate she was to you in a total of about five minutes of knowing her, you could bloody *hear* it. Wait... that’s a bit too far,” she thinks with her hands, “but you get my point.”

“I do.”

“Look, go and talk to her. Tell her about it, and if she turns you down, which I’m sure she won’t, then it wasn’t meant to be. And I’ll kick her ass,” Lena signs, the positivity radiating off of her body to an extent that it shines on Fareeha.

“Thank you, Lena,” she ends wholeheartedly, mustering what truthfulness she can into her words.

“All things wrapped up, though, I’m truly sorry for what’s happening to you. I hope with all my heart that you get through it, and I’ll be waiting for you on the other side.” She shuffles closer to Fareeha and wraps her in a genuine hug.

Fareeha wishes she could find the words to express her gratitude, but she shows it off in her actions, blinking away tears and tightly hugging the smaller woman back.

the art of reconciliation

Chapter Notes

aaand here it is! i'd blame this /late/ update on how busy school makes me but i am just a genuinely bad person that procrastinates everything i do, so. i haven't written in a bit, so excuse this chapter if it feels a bit off.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Quiet anxiety visits Fareeha as she approaches the residence of her ex-lover through a chilled hallway. She stands tall and stiff as the view of apartment 24 occupies her sights. She takes a deep breath and exhales, hoping to take the superior feeling of uneasiness out along with the air.

Fareeha turns to the timber-laden entrance, pulling up the hoodie she clads in over her hair. She raises her hands to knock but hesitates, overwhelmed by a sudden rush of unknown fear. Her hand trembles as a faint migraine forms at the forefront of her skull. She doesn't want to do this, to make Angela experience the same heartbreak she felt merely three weeks ago all over again (that is, if she is still concerned for Fareeha and her well-being). Guilt she cannot control inhabits her body.

She regains her breath after a few moments and a mental pep talk. She raises her fists to the closed door and knocks thrice, the coldness of her fingers coming into contact with the wood harsh. She barely has time to react when the door opens almost instantly, as if Angela had been expecting her.

Fareeha's wide eyes meet Angela's distraught ones, and her heart drops. She thinks Angela is having an identity crisis when she sees varying emotions flash by her dull expression in a matter of seconds. Feelings of anger, feelings of dejection, feelings of hurt, confusion, nostalgia, irritation, and longing fill up the blonde's gaze, and Fareeha cannot even bring herself to mask the underlying self-reproach she inevitably feels. She shifts under Angela's empty stare.

"Fareeha," Angela announces in chagrin as though she cannot believe the view before her. Her hand finds the doorknob while the other rests idle to her side.

Fareeha feels out of place. "Can we talk?"

"I don't see the need to talk about anything. You've made your intentions quite clear." Angela

remorselessly signs, clenching her jaw.

“Please, Angela.” She desperately signs, all indications of confidence wavering. “It’s important.”

Angela avoids her eye contact by looking past Fareeha, her features expressionless. She looks as though she’s debating Fareeha’s request, weighing down the pros and the cons. She comes to a wordless conclusion when she meets Fareeha’s intent stare and nods once, opening the door further for the taller woman to enter. Fareeha silently thanks her.

Rain paints all windows and the late sky does nothing to soothe her. She is offered a drink from Angela, to which she politely declines, and takes her place on the nearest couch. Angela sits on a chair furthest from Fareeha, and Fareeha’s heart clenches at the action. She waits for Fareeha to speak, sitting cross-legged in an outfit mirroring the younger woman’s one and readjusting her reading glasses.

Fareeha’s mind is blank; several thoughts swim through her mind but she doesn’t know which to grasp at. She initiates the conversation by straightening her back and asking, “How are you doing?”

Angela shrugs, her eyes tired and her movements lazy. “I’m still breathing.”

The chill in the room makes Fareeha’s body shiver and if Angela noticed, she didn’t care. Normally, Fareeha would scoot over next to Angela and cuddle the Swiss for warmth, burying her face in the crook of Angela’s neck in silent relish. They would visit the café they had their first ‘date’ on, buying hot chocolates with arms entwined and both enjoying the other’s affection.

But now, however, she wants nothing more than to reach out to Angela, replace her flat expression with the smile Fareeha misses when she tells a witty joke (that is, once in a blue moon that Angela actually appreciates the Brunette’s humour). The smile where her eyes crinkle and shine in pleasure, her teeth bared in a humorous indication, and her cheeks a slight crimson colour from laughing a little too hard at a joke that was, in all honesty, not even that funny; because she loved Fareeha. And Fareeha could endure her pain when she sees Angela contented, because she loves her too.

She loves her too. Her feelings for Angela have not faltered during her absence, because why would you want to forget someone who gives you a reason to live?

The vague response to her question was not uncalled for; she had expected it. Realising the

conversation was going nowhere, she looks at a dishevelled Angela, heart in her hands, and lets it all out. “When I visited the hospital, the doctors had a check up on me. They immediately thought that something was wrong. I don’t know how; maybe it was their instincts or the ‘doctor sense’ they all had.”

Angela only watches, not moving a muscle.

Fareeha continues. “I got a few tests done, as well as an MRI. Of course, the doctors found some unusual behaviour in the upper region of my body. So, I had to get a biopsy.

“I don’t know what I was expecting, to be honest. I thought it was something minor, something that can be cured within a matter of days and a few medication. But with my luck, it wasn’t.”

Angela sits expectantly, her posture steadfast.

Fareeha swallows back a cough. The lack of response Angela is exhibiting is rather concerning; Fareeha feeling as though her visit is pointless. “I waited a few hours for the results. When the doctor received it, she called me in, smiling sadly as if to mitigate her next words. Then she spoke, and all I could think of, Angela, was you and your reaction.” She added in the final part to evoke some sort of emotion out of the older woman.

“What did she say?” Angela hurries her. She disregards what Fareeha had just said.

Fareeha takes a deep breath and reveals the truth. Her eyes start to gloss. “I have cancer, Angela. Cancer of the ear. It’s lethal and it’s- it’s progressive. It spurted out a few months ago and the doctors still don’t know the cause.”

Angela doesn’t patronise her. Angela doesn’t look at her with sorrowful eyes or makes her feel less inferior, because she understands. She’s been to medical school; she knows the pain. Maybe not first-hand, but regardless.

Fareeha waits for Angela who currently has a hand concealing her eyes. She thinks she catches the Swiss’ lips trembling, but cannot tell for certain in the room’s dim lighting. She waits for Angela to say something, to say anything, but no words come her way. Fareeha faces away from her, her vulnerability fragile.

And for the first time, the world seems too real for Fareeha. Like the actuality of it all has just hit

her, and it is unforgiving.

She chokes back a sob as she glances at some movements in the corner of her eye. Angela hoists herself upwards, removes her glasses and sits on the furthest edge of the couch Fareeha occupies. She sets down her glasses on a tableside and looks up.

“I still spoke in sign language, you know.” She pauses with a head shake for dramatic effect. “Ever since you left me, I was broken; I didn’t know what to do. When I conversed with my acquaintances, I would start using my hands to communicate, even though you were the only person I knew that knows ASL. It was a habit, I guess. You changed me.” Angela sniffles and rubs at her nose.

Fareeha doesn’t know what to say, so she keeps quiet. A lump gradually forms at the back of her neck.

“I loved you, yet you pushed me away. I thought that that was it, that nothing else will top my heartbreak. I waited for a message or a visit to tell me that ‘hey, it was a lie, I never meant to hurt you’, but nothing came. Naïve, I know. But it’s the truth. And now you’re here with me, telling me that you have a life-threatening illness, and my feelings I thought I had buried sprouted out again.”

Fareeha feels inclined to apologise. For what, she doesn’t know. She feels small as memories of *that* day crash into her, her body frail. “I’m sorry.”

Angela waits a few seconds. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I didn’t want to cause you despondency with the state I currently reside in. So instead, I cut off our ties in hopes of it being easier for both you and me to deal with.” She wants to add that it wasn’t easy for her, that the breakup made it even more difficult to deal with. She needed support and comfort, something she didn’t receive. And only now does she realise that even though it was for the most selfless of intentions, it wasn’t fair to her. She lost the person dearest to her.

More silence ensues. Angela gathers up all the courage she can muster and asks, “Did you mean anything you said?”

“No.” Fareeha briskly replies with no hint of doubt or regret.

Angela lets out a shaky breath at this. Fareeha catches her trying to refrain a tear, blinking hard as if her life depended on it. She looks up at Fareeha, a stare filled with desperateness and wasted time. Fareeha watches on with woeful eyes.

Angela shifts closer to Fareeha, and the latter freezes. “The world is being very unfair to you, Fareeha. You don’t deserve this.” She reaches out for Fareeha’s hand and brings her lips to it. She places a strong (with a hint of passion) kiss to Fareeha’s warm hand, contrasting Angela’s cold one, and leads it to her forehead.

Fareeha gapes in awe. Angela’s actions were a cultural symbol widely practiced in the Middle East, representing respect and support. It is expressed as a sign of endearment, and Fareeha’s heartbeat pounds louder.

Angela sets down the Egyptian’s hand and continues, “But I will be there for you every step of the way, because I know you will get through this.”

It’s funny how Fareeha doesn’t even acquire the same amount of determination Angela shows. “Thank you,” she mouths, grasping on to Angela’s hands.

Fareeha pulls her into a hug, because it’s not the right time to kiss. She shuts her eyes and lets her emotions overtake her body. She sobs into Angela’s shoulders for two reasons. One: to come to terms with her status and fate in the company of the person she loves.

And two: because she has finally found the comfort she ached for on the hospital bed.

Chapter End Notes

just a heads up: you can reach me on twitter or play with me on psn in my bio!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!